

waiting and yearning is not enough, and we should act otherwise. We should set to work and meet "the demands of the day"³⁴—of our life's work—both professionally and personally. This is easy to do, though, as long as we each find and obey the daemon that holds in its hands the threads of our *own* life.

THE POLITICIAN'S WORK

THE LECTURE you have asked me here to give today will disappoint you in many ways, I'm afraid. Naturally, you would expect any speech about the work of politics to take a stance on current political issues, but I intend to do so only in my conclusion, with respect to certain purely formal questions about the *meaning* of political activity in one's life. I will avoid all discussion of *which* political goals to pursue—the *content* of one's political activity—for that has nothing to do with the general question of the politician's work and what the very idea of politics as a life's work might mean. —So, to begin.

What do I mean by politics? *Politik* in German is an extraordinarily broad concept, encompassing every kind of activity that involves exerting authority. We say banks have a foreign exchange "*Politik*"—a "policy" or "program" that they pursue; the national bank has an interest-rate *Politik*, a union pursues "strike politics," we can say a city or village has an "education politics," a company's board of directors has a stance that might be called its "politics," and there is even the "politicizing" of a clever wife trying to influence her husband. Obviously I am not covering such a broad concept this evening. I will be speaking of politics only in the sense of leading, or attempt to influence the leadership of, a *political* grouping, which today means: a *modern state*.

Now, what is a "political" grouping, from a sociological perspective? What is a "state"? We cannot come up with a sociological definition of this entity based on the specific actions it takes, for there is practically no task that some political group or another has not undertaken somewhere, and none that is always, let alone *exclusively*, appropriate for the organizations we call political—nowadays, modern states. The modern state cannot be defined by its aims, but rather, sociologically speaking, only by the specific *means of action* that it (and every other political group) has recourse to: physical violence. "Every state is based on force," as Trotsky put it in Brest-Litovsk.¹ And he was right. If only there were political systems that did not use violence: *then* the concept of "the state" would fall away and *then* would we see "anarchy" in the true sense of the word.

Violence is, of course, not the state's only or even normal means of action—I intend to say nothing of the kind. But violence is what is *specific* to the state. And the relationship between violence and the state is particularly close at present. In the past, it was perfectly normal for all sorts of different groups, starting with family clans, to make use of physical violence. Today, in contrast, we would have to say that the state is the *only* human community that (successfully) claims a *monopoly on legitimate physical violence* for itself, within a certain geographical territory (this territorial aspect is a defining feature). All other groups and individuals are granted the right to use physical violence only insofar as the *state* allows it—that is what characterizes our current system. The state is considered the only source for the "right" to commit violence. "Politics" thus means, for my purposes today, seeking power or trying to influence the distribution of power,

whether among different states or among groups of people within the single state that encompasses them.

All this essentially matches the common parlance. When a question is described as "a political question," when a minister or official is said to be "political," or when a decision has been made "for political reasons"—in every case, what is meant is the same: the question was answered, the official's sphere of activity was defined, the decision was made primarily on the basis of delegating, preserving, or reassigning power. Anyone practicing politics seeks power—either as the means to serve other ends (whether selfish or idealistic), or else "for its own sake," which means: to enjoy the feeling of prestige that power confers.

The state, like the forms of political organization that historically preceded it, is a relationship in which some people have the authority to *rule over* others using the means of legitimate force (i.e., force seen as legitimate). For the state to survive, then, the ruled must *accept* the authority claimed by the rulers. When and why do they do this? What conceptual justifications and external means of force sustain this relationship of authority?

To begin with the conceptual justifications—that is, what the *legitimacy* of the ruler's authority rests on—there are fundamentally three. First, hallowed *custom*, valid since time immemorial and perpetuated by habit: the authority of "how it's always been." This is "traditional" rule, like that of the old patriarchs and hereditary monarchs. Next, there is the authority of an exceptional personal *gift of grace* (charisma), and people's entirely personal devotion and personal trust in the revelations, heroism, or other leadership qualities of an individual. This is "charismatic" rule, like that of a prophet

or—in the political realm—a nonhereditary warlord, a ruler elected by the people, or nowadays a great demagogue or leader of political parties. Third and finally, there is rule by virtue of “the law”: belief in the validity of legal *statutes* and professional “competence” based on rational rules; in other words, one’s willingness to obediently carry out one’s legal duties. This is the rule exerted by the modern “public servant” and anyone else who similarly uses the power he holds to serve the state.

Obviously, the main *motives* for acquiescing to authority include a variety of interests, especially hope and fear: fear of revenge from magical forces or from the ruler, hope for rewards in this life or the next. More of that in a moment. But the basis that “legitimizes” this acquiescence is essentially in one of the three “pure” categories just mentioned. And these legitimating ideas with their respective conceptual justifications are very significant for the structure of the given system of authority. Of course we rarely encounter any of these pure types in reality, but this lecture is not the place to get into a discussion of the highly complex deviations, combinations, and transitional forms among the three—that is a subject for political science.²

For my discussion today, the most relevant type is the second: the one where the ruler’s authority rests on the devotion to his purely personal “charisma” felt by those who are ruled. This type illustrates most clearly what we mean by a “vocation” for politics. Where there is devotion to the charisma of the prophet, or wartime leader, or great demagogue in the ancient Greek *ecclesia*³ or modern parliament—in all these cases, such a man is held to have an “inner calling” to lead, and people accept his rule not because of customs or laws but because they believe in him. The leader may or may

not live for his cause, “strive for his work”⁴—he surely does, if he is more than a vain and narrow-minded upstart, a product of the moment—but what his supporters, disciples and followers and party members, are devoted to is *him* as a person, his personal qualities.

Throughout history and around the world, the two most important kinds of leaders are on the one hand magicians and prophets, on the other hand warlords, bandit chieftains, and *condottieri* chosen by some part of the population. Another type of leader more relevant here is specific to the Western world: *political* leaders, in the form of, first, the autocratic “demagogue” of the city-state, an institution confined to the West and especially the Mediterranean, and second, the parliamentary “party leader,” who emerged likewise in the West in the constitutional state. These are politicians “by vocation” in the most authentic sense of the word, but naturally they are never the *only* influential figures in the political struggle for power. Their effectiveness is determined by the resources they have at their disposal.

What do the ruling political powers *do* to assert their rule? This question applies to every kind of domination, hence also to political rule in all its forms—traditional, charismatic, and legal.

Every instance of continuously administered rule has two prerequisites: first, people have to be predisposed to obey the men who claim to exert legitimate power; second, given this obedience, the rulers must have at their disposal the personnel and equipment needed to exert physical force when necessary.

The people who administer this rule—the individuals who concretely represent political authority (just as such people constitute the outward appearance of every other

kind of authority)—are not, of course, bound to obey those who hold power solely because of the legitimating idea discussed above. They are also bound by two factors that appeal to their personal interests: material gain and social status. Material gain in the form of fiefs of vassals, the livings granted to officials under feudalism, the wages of modern civil servants; social status in the form of knightly honor, the privileges of the estates, the prestige of the civil servant—these constitute the administrator's rewards, and the fear of losing them is the ultimate basis for the solidarity between the leader who holds power and those who administer it for him. This is true in the case of charismatic leaders as well: with military leaders, the rewards are military glory and booty; with demagogic leaders, they are the "spoils" of exploiting the ruled by means of a monopoly of public offices, profits determined by political loyalty, and bonuses to flatter their vanity.⁵

To exert and sustain the rule of force, various concrete material things are necessary, just as in a business. And every system of state falls into one of two categories: Either the people on whose obedience the ruler depends—civil servants, officials, whatever they are—possess their *own* means of exerting power (money, buildings, weapons, fleets of vehicles, horses, what have you), or else they are "separated" from their means of administration, the same way that employees and proletarians in today's capitalist enterprises are "separated" from the means of production.⁶ In other words, the distinction is between a ruler who *himself controls* the administration and has it carried out by personal servants or employed officials or personal favorites and confidants (who do not themselves own the material means of carrying out their master's orders) and a ruler who doesn't. This distinction applies to every administrative system in the past.

Let me call a political organization in which the subordinates own part or all of the means of administration one that is "divided into *estates*." For example, feudalism is a system divided into estates: the vassal pays out of his own pocket the administrative and legal costs of the fief granted to him, and he equips and provisions his men for war; the vassal's vassals do the same. This has consequences for the lord, of course, since the lord's power depends entirely on the vassal's personal loyalty and the fact that the latter's landholdings and social status derive their "legitimacy" from him.

Still, going back to the earliest political structures, we always find the lord himself taking direct control over the administration of power through personal dependents: slaves, household officials, servants, "favorites," and recipients of sinecures of all sorts paid in money or in kind by the lord himself, from his own pocket, which is to say from the revenues of his own patrimony. He tries to create an army that is dependent solely on him because it is equipped and provisioned from his own granaries, warehouses, and armories. The lord in an "estate" system may share his power with an independent "aristocracy," ruling with their help; here, in contrast, he relies either on members of his own household or plebeians (men lacking in property, from social strata with no social honor of their own, who are thus totally bound to the lord in material terms, having no potentially competing power of their own). All forms of patriarchal and hereditary rule, sultanistic despotism, and bureaucratic states are of this type—bureaucratic states most of all, which is to say, the system that, in its most rational form, characterizes the modern state.

The modern state begins to develop wherever the monarch starts dispossessing the independent, "private" authorities

existing alongside him of their administrative power: everyone besides him, that is, who owns weapons and other means of control, financial resources, and goods of all kinds that can be applied politically. The whole process is a perfect parallel to the development of a capitalist enterprise through the gradual expropriation of independent producers. In the end, we have a modern state concentrating control of all political "means of production" (i.e., means of administration) at a single point, with not a single official left who spends his own money or manages buildings, supplies, tools, and war machinery that he himself owns. In short, the modern "state"—this is a key part of its definition—has a complete "separation" of the administrative personnel, both officials and clerks, from the material means of their administration.

At this point, we see the most modern development of all: before our very eyes, the expropriator is expropriated of his political means of administering power and is thus barred from political power itself.⁷ The revolution has accomplished this, at least insofar as the legally appointed authorities have been replaced by leaders who, through usurpation or elections, have gained control of the political personnel who administer power as well as the machinery of administration, and who derive their legitimacy, irrespective of how rightly or wrongly, from the will of the governed. It is a different question whether, on the basis of this (at least apparent) success, they can reasonably hope to achieve the further expropriation of businesses within the capitalist economic system, which are run on entirely different principles from political administration despite all the far-reaching analogies between the two. I do not plan to speak on this question today.

For our purposes, I remain with the purely *conceptual* point that the modern state is an institutional form of rule that has successfully monopolized legitimate physical force as a means, within a specific geographical territory, and to this end has concentrated all material resources in the hands of its leader, dispossessing all the independent members of the "estates" who had previously controlled these resources. All control has been centralized in the state.

During the course of this process of political expropriation, which has played out to varying degrees of success in every country in the world, the first category of "professional politician" emerged, at first in the service of the prince. But these are "professional politicians" in a *second* sense: people without any desire to be rulers like the charismatic leaders, but rather who enter *into the service* of political rulers. In the historical battle for sole control that I'm describing, they put themselves at the prince's disposal and tried to implement the prince's policies, both to earn a living in the material sense and to give their life meaning in an ideal sense. Again, it is *only* in the Western world that we find *this* type of professional politician serving powers other than the princes. In the past, they were the princes' most important means of exercising political power and dispossessing others of that power.

Before I proceed, let me clarify what it means to be a "professional politician." Anyone can practice "politics"—that is, try to influence the distribution of power within and among different political structures—in one of two ways: either "on occasion," or as a part-time or full-time professional, the same as any other economic activity. We are all "occasional politicians" in this sense whenever we cast a vote or express our will in similar ways: applauding or booing at

a "political" meeting, making a "political" speech, and so forth. For many people, this is the extent of their connection to politics.

"Part-time" politicians today include the members of political clubs, committee members of party organizations, and others who generally pursue such activities only when needed, not *primarily* "organizing their lives around it" in either the material or the ideal sense. Likewise the members of public boards and similar advisory bodies, who perform their functions only upon request. So too a relatively large portion of our members of parliament, who are politically active only while parliament is in session—these figures are those who, in the past, were to be found among the "estates," meaning those who owned military or other important administrative matériel or who had the personal authority of a feudal lord. Many of these people by no means lived entirely, mostly, or any more than occasionally in the service of politics. Rather, they used their power to gain rents, or profits, and were politically active in the service of a political group only when their own lord or fellow members of the estate especially requested it. The same can be said of many of the assistants whom the prince recruited in his struggle to create a political operation under his sole control: the Räte von Haus aus⁸ and, farther back in time, a considerable portion of the ruler's counselors in the "curia" and other such advisory bodies.

Naturally, however, such part-time or occasional assistants were not enough for the ruler. He needed a staff of people entirely devoted to serving him as their *main* profession. The structure of the respective emerging dynastic political system as well as the entire shape of the culture depended crucially on where he obtained this personnel from. The

political systems that had completely eliminated or strictly limited princely power and constituted themselves as so-called free polities—"free" not in the sense of freedom from the rule of force as such, but as lacking traditionally legitimated princely power as the sole source of authority—needed such full-time personnel to an even greater extent. Historically, these polities were found in the West, and at their core was the city as a political organization; this was the form they first took in the Mediterranean cultural sphere. How did the "professional" politician (with politics as his main line of work) look in these cases?

There are two ways of doing the work of politics: Someone either lives "for" politics or lives "from" it. These are by no means mutually exclusive—a person generally does both, at least he tries to, but usually he actually does so materially as well. The person who lives "for" politics "organizes his life around it"—he makes it his life work, *psychologically* speaking. Either he likes the naked possession of the power he exerts, or he reinforces his inner equilibrium and increases his self-esteem by knowing that serving his "cause" gives his life *meaning*. In this sense, every serious person who lives for something also lives from it, psychologically. The distinction, then, refers to a much bigger aspect of the issue: the economic aspect. Those who make politics their permanent source of *income* are those who live "from" the work of politics; those who do not are the ones who live "for" politics.

In order to be able to live "for" politics in this economic sense, under a system of private property, a person has to satisfy certain prerequisites, very trivial ones from one perspective: he must in normal circumstances be economically independent of any income politics might bring him. In simple terms: He needs to be rich, or have some position in

private life that gives him sufficient income to live on. That's how it is in normal circumstances. Now, a warlord's followers are no more interested in normal economic conditions than the followers of a revolutionary on the streets. Both live from booty, robbery, confiscations, extorted "contributions," forcing people to accept worthless currency as payment—all of these being essentially the same thing. But these circumstances are, by definition, unusual: in the everyday economic world, only private wealth can provide the necessary independence.

There is another prerequisite: the person who has this income must remain "available," meaning that his income cannot require his constant personal attention or physical presence. The figure with the most such "availability" is the rentier; in other words, someone who makes money without doing any work at all, whether the propertied feudal lord of the past or the great landowner and propertied aristocrat of the present, who takes in rent from the land (and rents for slaves and bondsmen, in antiquity and the Middle Ages), or else the stockholder or the like with modern sources of investment income. Neither the worker *nor*—and this is particularly noteworthy—the employer, *especially* the modern big businessman, is "available" in this sense: they are tied to their job and *not* available, especially the employer, and the industrial one is much more tied down than the agricultural one with his seasonal tasks. For these people it is usually very difficult to find a substitute, even a temporary one. Likewise the doctor, for instance, all the more so the busier and more eminent he is. The lawyer, for purely logistical reasons that have to do with the nature of his work, finds it easier to take time off, which is precisely why lawyers have played a much greater, sometimes dominant role in politics. —There is no

need to continue to pile up examples here, but let me be clear about some of the implications of this argument.

Having the leaders of states or parties be people who live (economically speaking) entirely "for" politics, not "from" politics, necessarily means that political leaders are recruited from the "plutocratic" classes. The converse is not necessarily true, of course: such plutocratic leaders certainly *can* try to live "from" politics as well—in other words, exploit their political dominance for private economic gain. The two kinds of motive are by no means mutually exclusive. No social class has ever failed to try to use its position in some way. I mean only that the professional politician here does not *have* to seek payment for his political services, as everyone without independent means necessarily must. By the same token, politicians without independent wealth certainly *can* work in the interest of the task at hand, not in their own self-interest; they are not necessarily acting with merely or even predominantly private gain in view. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this accusation. Experience shows that the cardinal point to which the rich man directs his efforts, consciously or unconsciously, is preserving his economic "security," and that unconditional, ruthless political idealism is found, if not exclusively then mostly, among the classes who own nothing and who are thus entirely outside the group with an interest in preserving the existing economic system in a given society. This is especially true in exceptional—that is, revolutionary—periods.

What is true is that recruiting *non-plutocratic* political actors, both leaders and their followers, self-evidently *requires* that they receive a regular, reliable income from their political activities. *Either* politics can be "honorary" (volunteer, unpaid), and thus carried out by so-called independent (in

fact rich) people, predominantly from the rentier class, or leadership roles can be made accessible to those who are not wealthy, in which case they need to be paid.

The professional politician who lives from politics can do so in one of two ways: Either he makes his money from fees and perquisites for given services—tips and bribes being merely the irregular and technically illegal variants of this kind of income—or else he receives a regular payment in money, fixed benefits in kind, or a combination of the two.⁹ Either he holds something like a benefice, or he is a salaried “official.” Either he behaves as an “entrepreneur”—like the *condottiere* of the past, or those who bought or rented their office, or like the American party boss¹⁰ who treats his expenses as investments, in the expectation of using his influence to bring in a profitable return—or else he receives a fixed salary, like an editor or party secretary or modern minister or party official. In the past, monarchs, conquerors, or successful party leaders typically rewarded their followers with fiefs, gifts of land, benefices of all kinds, and, with the growth of the monetary economy, most often perks or other monetary benefits. Today, such “benefices” take a different form: party leaders reward faithful service by handing out jobs of all kinds in parties, newspapers, cooperatives, health insurance companies, municipalities, and states. All party struggles are not just for objective goals but, first and foremost, for the power to hand out offices.

All the struggles between local autonomy and centralized federal power in Germany, for instance, turn on which authorities—Berlin, or Munich and Karlsruhe and Dresden—have the power to bestow patronage. Losing influence in distributing offices is a greater blow to a party than suffering a setback in political goals. In France, replacing the prefect

after an election was always seen as a greater upheaval, prompting a greater reaction, than a change in the government's platform, since the latter was generally only a matter of words.¹¹ Especially in America, the old conflicts over the proper interpretation of the Constitution have vanished and the parties are merely groups of careerists, changing their objective platforms at will to chase the support of the voters. In Spain, until recently, “elections” were fixed from above by the two major parties so that they could take orderly turns and give their respective followers government posts. In the Spanish colonies, both the so-called elections and the so-called revolutions were really about the state trough, from which the victors hoped to be fed. In Switzerland, the parties amicably share offices on the basis of proportionality, and some of our “revolutionary” draft constitutions here in Germany, such as the first one proposed for Baden,¹² tried to extend this system to ministerial posts, thus treating the state and its offices purely as an agency for distributing benefits.¹³ The Center Party was especially enthusiastic about this and even made proportional distribution of offices according to religious affiliation, without regard to merit, part of its platform. Given the proliferating number of positions resulting from general bureaucratization, and the increasing demand for these positions as a kind of *guaranteed* reward, this trend is on the rise in all parties; the rank and file increasingly regard parties as a means to the end of such support.

There is, however, an opposing tendency. The modern civil service is increasingly specialized, requiring an educated, highly qualified workforce that has undergone many years of specialized training. This is a new class, with a highly developed sense of professional *honor* emphasizing honesty

and integrity. Without these virtues, the fateful risk of terrible corruption and common greed would loom large; the state itself might cease to function in purely practical terms, despite its importance for the economy having grown and continuing to grow, especially with the rise of Socialism. In the United States, the dilettantish administration by hundreds of thousands of strivers, down to the local mailman, who had to be fired and hired anew depending on the results of the presidential election without any stable career civil servants to ease the transition, has been swept away by the civil service reform.¹⁴ The unavoidable, purely logistical needs of administering a modern system made this change necessary.

In Europe, the professional bureaucracy underwent a division of labor into different roles. This development took place gradually, over the course of half a millennium, starting with the Italian cities and *signorie*, and with the conquering Norman states among the monarchies. The princes' *finances* prompted the decisive step. Emperor Maximilian's administrative reforms show how hard it was for the officials to oust the ruler from this sphere of activity, even under the extreme pressure of necessity and threat of Turkish domination—and even though finance was the realm perhaps least well suited to the dilettantism of a ruler who was above all a knight.¹⁵ Advances in military techniques produced expert officers; the growing complexity of legal procedures brought about the trained jurist. In all three areas—finance, war, and the law—the expert official definitively gained the upper hand in the more developed states in the sixteenth century. Thus at the same time as the absolute monarch gained power at the expense of the estates, he gradually surrendered that power to the bureaucratic experts who had made his victory over the estates possible.

The rise of the expert *bureaucracy* coincided with the development, admittedly in less noticeable transitions, of "influential *politicians*." There have always and everywhere been such royal "advisers" who actually run the show, of course. In the Orient, the figure of the grand vizier¹⁶ developed out of the need to relieve the sultan of personal responsibility for the success of the regime. In the West, diplomacy first became its own deliberately cultivated art in the age of Charles V, of Machiavelli, especially under the influence of the Venetian ambassadors, whose reports were studied with passionate zeal in diplomatic circles. These diplomats had mostly received a humanistic education and treated one another as members of an educated class of initiates, much like the humanist Chinese statesmen of the late Warring States period.

With the rise of constitutional authority, states increasingly needed to have a leading statesman to conduct politics *as a whole*, including domestic politics, in a coherent and systematic way. Previously, there had of course been individuals acting as advisers—in reality, leaders—of the monarch. But administrative authority was organized differently at that point, even in the most developed states. *Groups* of advisers were the rule. In theory, and in practice too, to a gradually decreasing extent, the monarch presided over their meetings and made the final decisions. But this system with an advisory group led to expert reports, countervailing opinions, strategic votes of majorities and minorities, and thence to the purely personal confidants, the "cabinet," with whom the prince surrounded himself as a counterweight to the highest official authorities; he delegated cabinet members to convey his decisions in response to the decisions of the state council, or whatever the group's name might be. In this

way, the prince, increasingly slipping into the role of a dilettante, tried to evade the ever-increasing weight of the officials' expert training and keep hold on the reins of power.

This tacit struggle between expert officials and autocratic rule existed everywhere. The situation changed only when the monarch was faced with parliaments and parliamentary leaders' desire for power. Yet very different conditions led to what was outwardly the same result (with certain variations).

Wherever dynasties kept real power, as they did in Germany, the monarch's interests were aligned with the bureaucracy's, *against* parliament and its claims to power. It was in the officials' interest to have leading positions (i.e., ministerial posts) filled from their ranks as well—in other words, to make these posts the goals of official advancement. It was in the monarch's interests to nominate ministers of his choice from the ranks of those beholden to him. But both sides wanted to confront parliament with a united front: they wanted a single head of the cabinet to replace the group-adviser system. The monarch also needed a single individual who would be answerable to the parliament but also able to address it and negotiate with it, representing the monarch's interests and enabling the monarch to remain above party conflicts and strictly partisan attacks. All these motives and interests worked together to push for a single chief minister in charge of the bureaucracy.

The trend toward unified parliamentary power was even stronger where parliament had gained the upper hand against the monarch, as in Great Britain. Here the "cabinet" under a single parliamentary "leader" became a committee representing the entity not defined by law but holding all real political power: whatever *party* was in the majority at the time. The official group of advisers as such were not the tools

of the true ruling power—namely, the party—and could therefore not truly conduct the business of government. Instead, a ruling party needed an effective and reliable organ of power assembled from the actually leading figures—a cabinet from the ruling party—to maintain power at home and pursue grand policies abroad. And, in turn, it needed a single figure accountable vis-à-vis the public, especially the members of Parliament as a whole, for all decisions: this is the prime minister. This British system, in the form of parliamentary ministries, was then adopted on the Continent, and only in America and the democratic systems influenced by America was there an entirely different system, according to which the chosen leader of a party won a popular election and was placed at the head of an official apparatus he himself staffed. He depended on the parliament or congress only for budgetary and legislative matters.

The transformation of politics into a "business" (the modern party system) that necessitated specialized training in the methods of the struggle for power now meant that public functionaries had to be divided into two categories (not distinguished with absolute clarity but still clearly different): career officials and "political officials." The latter are defined by the fact they serve "at the pleasure" of the leaders: they can be transferred or fired at any time—like the prefects in France and comparable officials in other countries—in stark contrast to the "independent" judiciary and other such figures. In Britain, such "political officials" include those who lose their posts with every change of parliamentary majority and hence change of cabinet, most notably those responsible for the general "administration of home affairs" and the "political" element of such administration: maintaining "order," or, in other words, upholding the existing

system of rule. In Prussia, the Puttkamer Decree stated that these officials were required to "represent government policy" or face disciplinary action;¹⁷ like French prefects, they were used as a bureaucratic apparatus for influencing elections.

Under the German system, unlike in other countries, most "political" officials were of the same quality as the career civil servants, since appointment to either kind of post required a university degree, specialized exams, and a fixed period of apprenticeship. This feature, characteristic of the modern professional bureaucracy, applies to every level except that of the leaders—the ministers. Even under the old regime, a man could become the Prussian minister of culture without having ever attended college, while only those who had passed the prescribed exams could become senior civil servants under him. Under Althoff in the Prussian Ministry of Education, for instance, it was widely understood that the well-trained senior civil servant or department head was far better informed than his supervisor about the practical problems in his area.¹⁸ The same was true in Britain. The underling was thus the more powerful figure in everyday affairs. And this had a certain logic: the minister was the representative of the nexus of *political* power, charged with representing its political standards and directing his specialized subordinates accordingly.

It is very similar in private businesses: the official "sovereign," the shareholders, has as little influence on the actual running of the business as the monarch of a "nation" ruled by civil servants; the people who decide how the business is run, the "supervisory board" mandated by the banks, limit themselves to economic directives and leave administration to the staff, since they are not themselves in a position to manage practical affairs. The current structure of the revo-

lutionary state is not fundamentally different: total amateurs in possession of machine guns have been handed the power to run the government, and they intend to use the trained officials as heads and hands to implement their orders.¹⁹ The problems with this current system lie elsewhere—but they do not concern us here.

Rather, let me address the typical nature of the professional politician, both the "leaders" and their followers. This has changed over time, and even today it takes various, very different forms.

In the past, as we have already seen, "professional politicians" arose to serve the princes in their struggles against the estates. Let me review their main types.

The monarch turned to politically usable classes outside the estates in his struggle against the estates, first and foremost the clergy. This was true in India and Indochina, in Buddhist China and Japan, and in Lamaist Mongolia, just as much as in medieval Christendom. Practically speaking, it was because the clergy were literate. Brahmins, Buddhist priests, and lamas were brought in and Christian bishops and priests were used as political advisers for the same reason in all these places: to gain literate administrators whom the emperor or prince or khan could use against the aristocracy. The cleric, especially if celibate, stood outside the fray of normal political and economic interests and, unlike the ruler's vassals, was not tempted to wrest political power of his own from the ruler to pass down to his own children. He was automatically "separated" from the monarchical administration, due to his class position.

Humanistically educated literati formed a second such class outside the estates.²⁰ There was a time when men learned to give orations and Latin and write verses in Greek in order

to become political advisers and, especially, compose political memoranda for a prince. Humanist academics were in their first bloom, with professorships of "poetics" funded by the crown. In Germany this phase ended quickly, leaving little trace politically but not without lasting influence on our educational system. Not so in East Asia. The Chinese mandarin²¹ is, or originally was, much like our Renaissance humanist: a man of letters with a diploma attesting to his humanities education in the literary monuments of the distant past. Read the diaries of Li Hung-chang²² and you will find that he was proudest of the poetry he wrote and his skill at calligraphy. This social class, with its habits and cultural conventions derived from Chinese antiquity, has determined the entire fate of China—our own destiny might perhaps have been similar, if the humanists had had any chance to prevail to the same extent.

The third group outside the estates was the court nobility. Once the monarchs had succeeded in stripping the aristocracy of the political power derived from their estates, they lured the nobility to the court and used them in political and diplomatic service. One reason for the shift in our educational system in the seventeenth century was that professional politicians drawn from the court nobility replaced the humanist literati in the service of the monarchs.

The fourth group was a specifically English phenomenon: the "gentry," a patrician class consisting of minor nobility and urban rentiers. First, the king allied with this group against the barons, putting them in charge of the offices connected to "self-government";²³ over time, he became increasingly dependent on them. They kept control of all the local government offices that they had taken on without pay

but in the interests of their own social power. In so doing, they saved England from the bureaucratization that was the fate of all the states on the Continent.

A fifth group was particular to the West and especially the European continent, and of decisive significance for its entire political system: university-trained lawyers. Roman law, transformed under the bureaucratic late-Roman state, had powerful, long-lasting effects, nowhere clearer than in the fact that, throughout Europe, trained lawyers rationalized the state, revolutionizing the way politics worked. This was true even in Britain, although there the large national guilds of lawyers hindered the adoption of Roman law. We find nothing analogous anywhere else in the world. Neither the budding efforts at rational legal thinking in the Indian Mimamsa²⁴ school nor the continuation of classical legal thought in Islam could prevent theological ideas from stifling rational jurisprudence; the procedures around trials, in particular, were never completely rationalized. The only context in which complete rationalization occurred was where Italian jurists continued classical Roman jurisprudence, the product of a totally unique political system that rose from the classical city-state to world dominance, where the *usus modernus* of late-medieval pandects and canon lawyers developed, and where theories of natural law arising from Christian legal thought were secularized. The great representatives of this juridical rationalism were the Italian *podestà*, the French royal jurists who created the formal means by which the king could undermine seigniorial rule, the canon lawyers and natural-law theologians of conciliarism, the court jurists and educated judges of the Continental monarchs, the Dutch professors of natural law, the "monarchomachs,"

the English royal and parliamentary lawyers, the *noblesse de robe* of the French parliaments, and finally the lawyers of the revolutionary period.

Without this legal rationalism, both the emergence of the absolute state and the Revolution would have been unthinkable. The lawyer's approach inspired the remonstrances of the French parliaments and the *cabiers* of the French Estates General from the sixteenth century up to 1789; the members of the French Convention, though elected on the basis of universal suffrage, included one isolated proletarian, very few bourgeois businessmen, and huge numbers of lawyers of all kinds, without whom the nature of these radical intellectuals' proposals would have been unimaginable. The modern lawyer and modern democracy have been inseparable ever since. And lawyers in our sense, as an independent class, exist only in the postmedieval West, developing under the influence of rationalization from the "advocate" in the formalistic German trial procedures.²⁵

The importance of lawyers in politics in the West since the emergence of parties is no accident. Politics conducted by political parties simply means politics driven by interested parties; I will discuss what that means shortly. And what the trained lawyer does is pursue a case effectively on behalf of an interested party—more effectively than any "civil servant," as the superiority of enemy [Allied] propaganda has shown. It is true that the lawyer can sometimes argue "well," practically speaking, and prevail in a "bad" case, meaning one supported by logically weak arguments. But only he is in a position to prevail in a "good" case (one supported by logically "strong" arguments), or in other words, do "well" in this sense. The civil servant acting as a politician all too often makes a "good" case turn out "bad" by conducting it

"badly" (in terms of technique). We have experienced that ourselves. Politics today is predominantly conducted in public via the spoken or written word, and calculating the effect of these words is central to the task of the lawyer, while not at all the specialty of the bureaucrat, who neither is nor should be a demagogue. When he tries to be one anyway, he more often than not turns out to be very bad at it.

The work of the true civil servant is not to pursue politics; his task is to "administer" policies—*impartially*—and this fact is crucial for our assessment of the former regime here in Germany.²⁶ It holds true even for bureaucrats in so-called political administration positions, officially at least, as long as there is no threat to the *raison d'état*; that is, the vital interests of the ruling system. He is to perform his duties *sine ira et studio*, "without anger or partiality" as Tacitus says—which means he is to avoid what political actors, both leaders and followers, necessarily always do: *fight*. Taking sides, struggle, passion—*ira et studium*, in short—is the politician's element, above all the sphere of the political leader, whose actions are answerable to an entirely different, in fact opposite principle than the bureaucrat's. The bureaucrat takes it as a point of honor to carry out his superior's orders fully and competently—to do things for which his superior takes responsibility exactly as conscientiously as if his superior's orders matched his own convictions. Without this discipline and self-restraint, which is in the deepest sense ethical, the whole system would fall apart. The point of honor for a political leader or leading statesman, on the other hand, is to *take* exclusive responsibility for his actions, not deny or evade it. It is therefore precisely the most ethical civil servants who make bad—irresponsible and thus unethical—politicians: the kind that we in Germany have alas had in leading

positions time and time again. This is what's known as "rule by the bureaucrats," and truly we are not besmirching their honor as *civil servants* in the least when we judge the weakness of this system from the point of view of *political* success.

Let me return to the various types of political figures.

The "demagogue" has been the typical political leader in the West since the emergence of the constitutional state and especially of democracies. Despite the rather nasty ring of the word, we must not forget that Pericles, not Cleon, was the first to bear the name. Without office—or rather, as military commander, which in fact was the only elective office in classical democracy, unlike the other positions determined by lottery—Pericles led the sovereign *ecclesia* of the *demos*, or people of Athens. The modern "demagogue" too uses speech—a massive quantity of spoken words, if we include in that category the campaign speeches a candidate is required to give. But of course modern demagogy more importantly relies on the printed word, particularly those by political writers and most especially *journalists*.

The sociology of modern political journalism is a substantial topic in its own right that I cannot begin to cover in this lecture, even in abbreviated form. But a few points simply must be made here. The journalist, along with the demagogue in general and, incidentally, the lawyer (at least on the Continent, unlike in England and the earlier situation in Prussia)—and the artist as well—has no fixed social position. He belongs to a kind of pariah caste that "society" always judges socially by its least ethical members. As a result, the most outlandish ideas about journalists and their work are common currency.

Few people realize that a truly *good* piece of journalism requires at least as much "intelligence" as any scholarly writ-

ing, especially since it has to be produced on demand, on the spot, under completely nonacademic conditions, and moreover it must generate an immediate *response*. It is almost never acknowledged that the journalist's responsibility is far greater than the scholar's, and that as a rule the reputable journalist's *sense* of responsibility is by no means less than the scholar's—in fact it is greater, as we saw during the war. This is almost never acknowledged because we quite naturally tend to remember precisely the *irresponsible* pieces of journalism, with their often-terrible effects. No one believes that competent journalists are *more* discreet than other people, as a rule. But they are. The incomparably greater temptations that journalists face, along with the other conditions they operate under today, are what make the press something the public has come to view with total contempt and, yes, abject cowardice. I cannot discuss today what might be done to fix this, only the *political* role journalists can play, their chances for gaining positions of political leadership. Up until now, there were opportunities for journalists to pursue political work only in the Social Democratic Party, but even there, editorial positions, despite largely resembling civil service positions, rarely led to a *leadership* position.

In the bourgeois parties, the prospects of gaining political power by this route have if anything worsened in the past generation. Of course every important politician needs newspapers to help him and hence needs contacts with the press. But, surprisingly, it remains very much the exception for *leaders* of parties to emerge from the ranks of journalists. This is because, due to the enormous increase in the intensity and time-sensitivity of the profession, the journalist, especially the nonwealthy journalist tied to his profession, is overwhelmingly "unavailable" in the sense discussed earlier. It

is a milestone around the neck of any politician to have to write articles every day or even every week; I personally know examples of born leaders whose rise to power is prevented—practically, but even more so, psychologically—by this necessity.

The fact that relations between the press and the ruling powers of the state and the parties drastically lowered the level of journalism under the kaiser's regime is another large topic. The situation was different in the enemy countries. But there too—indeed, in all modern states—it seems that the working journalist's political influence is constantly on the wane while the capitalist press magnate's, such as "Lord" Northcliffe's, is on the rise.²⁷ In Germany, however, the big capitalist newspaper concerns have largely taken over the "gazettes," the papers full of local small ads, and generally promoted political indifference if anything. There was no money to be made from taking an independent political line, nor was that a way to gain the financially beneficial goodwill of the ruling political powers. People tried to use advertising money as well to influence the press politically during the war, a practice that seems likely to continue. The larger papers will no doubt be able to resist this pressure, but the smaller ones face a much more difficult situation.

Be that as it may, a journalistic career—despite its various attractions, the possibilities it affords for influencing politics, and the political responsibility it entails—is not a normal path for a political leader's rise in Germany nowadays. Perhaps we should say, "not a normal path anymore," or "not yet a normal path"—we will have to wait and see. Many journalists, though not all, have pushed to abandon the principle of anonymity,²⁸ but it is hard to say if this would change anything. During the war, various German newspa-

pers specially hired talented writers as lead editors, and they always published work under their own names, but in several well-known cases the result was unfortunately *not* to enhance these writers' sense of responsibility, as we might have expected. The tabloids that are notoriously the worst, whatever their political affiliation, used this strategy in part to try to boost their sales—often successfully. The gentlemen in question, both publishers and the sensationalist writers themselves, no doubt got richer—but they certainly didn't gain honor. This does not refute the principle, however; it is a complex question, and we must not generalize from a single case.

Still, *up until now* journalism has not been a path to true leadership roles or *responsible* political conduct. Only time will tell how things will develop in the future. Whatever happens, though, journalism will remain one of the most important career paths for professional political activity. It is not for everyone—least of all for people of weak character, especially those who need a secure social position for their inner equilibrium. A young scholar's life may be a matter of luck, but at least it is framed by stable conventions of social status that keep him on track. Meanwhile, the journalist's life is left to sheer chance in every way and involves working under conditions that test a person's inner fortitude like almost nothing else.

The journalist's often-bitter professional setbacks may not even be the worst of it—even the most successful journalist faces especially difficult psychological and ethical challenges. It is no small thing to consort with the most powerful people on earth in their drawing rooms, on a seemingly equal basis, and to be flattered because you are feared, while all the time knowing that as soon as the door closes behind you your host may have to explain to his guests why he had

anything to do with "the scoundrels from the press."²⁹ And it is truly no small task to crank out quick and convincing responses to any and every problem or issue in the world, whatever "the market" demands, falling into neither total superficiality nor undignified self-exposure with all its inexorable consequences. What's surprising is not that numerous journalists have lost their way or become worse human beings, but that, despite everything, this class of people contains so many worthy and genuine human beings, more than outsiders would dream of.

The journalist as a type of professional politician has a long history, but the figure of the *party official* is a development of recent decades—in some cases, mere years. To understand how this figure emerged, we must consider the organization of political parties and the nature of the party system.

In all political groups of any size with regular elections—entities larger in scope and authority than small, rural cantons—politics necessarily involves *organizing and coordinating various special interests*. A relatively small number of individuals interested mainly in political life (i.e., in gaining political power) recruit followers by advertising widely to the general public, put themselves or their protégés forward as candidates, raise money, and go in search of votes. Elections without these activities are inconceivable among groups of any significant size. In practical terms, this means that the enfranchised citizenry as a whole is divided into two groups—the politically active and the politically passive—and since this is a voluntary division, it cannot be eliminated by any rules such as mandatory voting, representation by "professional category," or anything else expressly or implicitly intended to overcome this state of affairs and thus rule by

professional politicians. Leaders and followers are the indispensable lifeblood of any party: leaders to recruit followers, and followers to recruit the passive voters who will elect the leader.

Within this overall structure, parties can be organized in different ways. The "parties" in the city-states of the Middle Ages, for instance—such as the Guelphs and the Ghibelines—had purely personal followings.³⁰ The *statuto della parte Guelfa* and disenfranchisement, removal from office, and confiscation of the property of the *nobili* (this term originally referring to the knightly families, entitled to hold a fief);³¹ the party committees connecting different regions; the rigid military organizations with bonuses paid for denunciations—all this recalls Bolshevism with its soviets, its carefully selected armies of soldiers and (especially in Russia) informers,³² its confiscations, and its stripping "the bourgeoisie" (entrepreneurs, tradesmen, rentiers, clergymen, descendants of the royal dynasty, and police agents) of both weapons and political rights. The analogy is even more striking when we look closer. The military organization of the Guelph party consisted entirely of knights formed into an army on the basis of feudal estate registers and led almost exclusively by the aristocracy. The Soviets, for their part, kept or rather reintroduced highly paid entrepreneurs, piecework wages, Taylorism, and discipline in the armed forces and the workplace, while remaining on the lookout for foreign capital investment—in short, they were forced to accept *all* the things they had fought against as bourgeois class institutions, simply to keep their state and economy in operation, and forced as well to take over the agents of the old Czarist secret police, the Okhrana, as the main instrument of their own state power.

In the case of political parties, then, we are dealing not with such organizations of physical violence, but with professional politicians trying to gain power for their party through ordinary "peaceful" campaigning. These parties in the usual sense typically began as followers of the aristocracy as well; for instance, in Britain. Whenever a peer changed parties, for whatever reason, everyone dependent on him did the same.³³ Until the Reform Act,³⁴ the major aristocratic families, beginning with the king, were patrons of a huge number of constituencies. Parties of notable citizens, which emerged everywhere with the growth of middle-class power, were closely associated with these aristocratic parties. The educated, property-owning citizens, under the leadership of the types of intellectual typical in the West, divided into parties on the basis of class interests, family traditions, or purely ideological reasons, then led those parties. Clergymen, teachers, professors, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, wealthy farmers, factory owners—in England a whole class considering itself "gentlemen"—first formed ad hoc associations, at best local political clubs; in times of turmoil, the petty bourgeoisie or occasionally even the proletariat would find its voice when their leaders emerged, although these leaders generally didn't come from within the group themselves.

At this stage, larger, permanently organized regional parties did not yet exist in the countryside. The members of Parliament were the only ones to hold the party together, while local elites were the ones responsible for selecting the candidates. Party platforms arose partly through the candidates' campaign promises, partly on the basis of meetings of the local elites or parliamentary party committees. Running the clubs, where there were clubs, was an unpaid job, non-professional as it were; more often there were no clubs, and

we find nothing but entirely informal political activity among the few people with a lasting interest in politics in normal times. Only the journalist was a paid professional political actor, and only the newspapers acted as a continuous political organization, aside from Parliament itself. Naturally, members of Parliament and parliamentary leaders knew which members of the local elite to approach when they wanted a particular course of political action, but only the larger cities had permanent party associations, run on modest membership fees, with periodic meetings and public assemblies at which the MP could report on his activities. Politics was a vital concern only in election season.

What prompted the move to ever-tighter party organization was the MPs' interest in electoral compromises among various districts and the impact of unified, nationally recognized platforms and unified national action as such. But even when the whole country is linked by a network of local party branches in the large and midsize cities, along with a set of "party agents" in constant contact with a particular member of Parliament acting as head of the central party office, the party apparatus remains in principle a group of members of local elites. There are still no paid officials, outside the central bureau; the local chapters are still led by "respected" individuals on the strength of the esteem in which they are already held—extraparlimentary "dignitaries" exerting their influence alongside the politicians who actually sit in Parliament. However, the press and local branches increasingly get their intellectual nourishment from material published by the party itself. Regular membership dues become indispensable, some of which is used to pay the costs of the party headquarters.

This is the stage that most German political parties found

themselves in fairly recent years. In France, the first stage was still partly in force: the stage of loose parliamentary alliances, a few well-known and respected locals from communities around the country, and platforms drafted by the candidates themselves or their patrons, sometimes at the moment the candidates were recruited to run for office, consisting of more or less local interpretations of the parliamentarians' goals and programs. This system would be replaced only gradually. There remained few full-time politicians, consisting mainly of elected deputies, the few employees of the central party, the journalists, and (in France) the careerists either in or seeking political office. Politics was overwhelmingly a part-time profession. Few deputies were qualified for ministerial posts, but since candidates had to be well-known local figures, there were not many candidates overall either. Meanwhile, very many people had an indirect interest—usually financial—in political affairs: because everything ministries did, especially in regard to personnel issues, involved considering what effect on the election that action might have, so everyone went through the local deputy in pursuing aims of all kinds. Whether he wanted to or not, the minister had to listen to any deputy who was part of the minister's majority. And so that's what every deputy wanted to be. The individual deputy controlled all the offices and every other kind of patronage in his district, and at the same time kept up a good relationship with the local elite, to ensure his own reelection.

This idyllic state of affairs, with local elites and members of parliament in charge of everything, stands in stark contrast to the more modern party structure, which arises from democracy, mass suffrage, the resulting need for parties to woo and organize the masses, and the need for a leadership that

is as unified as possible as well as a strictly disciplined rank and file. Local elites no longer dominate; members of parliament no longer issue directives. Professional, full-time politicians *outside* parliament take over the running of the party, either as "entrepreneurs" (which the American "party boss" or British "election agent"³⁵ essentially is) or as officials on a fixed salary. In strictly formal terms, this marks a far-reaching democratization of the political process. Instead of parliamentary factions deciding on the party's platform while the local elites control the nomination of candidates, party members organize and meet to decide candidates and nominate representatives to higher-level meetings, of which there may be several, all the way up to the "party congress." The fact is, of course, that the power is in the hands of those who do *continuous* work in the organization, or those on whom the party depends for personnel or money: either patrons or the leaders of powerful groups representing particular political interests (e.g., Tammany Hall³⁶). The crucial thing is that the people in charge of this whole apparatus, or "machine" as it is notably called in English, are able to rein in and direct the actual members of parliament. And this has particular significance for the selection of party *leadership*. It's possible to become the leader only if backed by the machine, even over the opposition of the head of parliament. In other words, with the emergence of this "machine" we have the introduction of *plebiscitary democracy*.³⁷

The party's followers, especially the officials and bosses, of course expect a personal reward from their leader's victory: either positions or other benefits. The crucial thing is that they expect rewards from *him*—not, or not only, from individual members of parliament. Above all, they hope that the demagogic effects of the leader's *personality* will win

votes and seats in the election, will thus bring the party to power and improve as much as possible its followers' chances of obtaining the desired rewards. Plus, psychologically, there is the satisfaction of working for someone you are personally devoted to, not just working for an abstract platform of a party composed of mediocrities—this is the “charismatic” element of leadership, one of its main springs.

This form of the party system ultimately prevailed, though to different degrees and in constant implicit struggle with the local elites and parliamentary representatives fighting to retain their influence: first in the bourgeois parties, especially in the United States, and then in the Social Democratic Party, especially in Germany. There is backsliding whenever the party lacks a universally acknowledged leader, and even when there is one, concessions of all types must be made to the vanity and self-interest of the party dignitaries. The most immediate danger is that the party machine can fall into the hands of the party *officials* who do the day-to-day work. Many Social Democrats feel that their party has succumbed to this “bureaucratization.”³⁸ And yet “officials” submit quite easily to a leader with a demagogically strong personality: after all, their interests, both material and psychological, are closely bound up with what they hope that leader will achieve for the party, and working for a leader is intrinsically more satisfying. When the local elites influence party affairs alongside the officials, as is the case in most bourgeois parties, it is much harder for a leader to rise to the top, because psychologically these “elites” feel that their little positions on boards or committees “are their whole life.” Their actions are prompted by resentment of the “upstart” demagogue, the *Homo novus*; by firm belief in the importance of having “party experience” (which is true enough); and by ideologi-

cal anxieties over the collapse of old party traditions. And they have all the traditionalist elements in the party on their side. The rural voters above all, but also the petty bourgeoisie, look for the name of the local figure they are long since familiar with, and they don't trust the new man—only to switch sides all the more loyally *if* the new man actually wins, of course.

Let me review a few main examples of this conflict between the two political systems, especially the rise of the plebiscitary form as described by Ostrogorski.³⁹ First, Britain, where party organizations consisted almost exclusively of local elites until 1868. In the countryside, the Tories relied on figures such as Anglican vicars, schoolmasters, and especially the large landowners of the county; the Whigs turned to nonconformist preachers (where there were any), postmasters, blacksmiths, tailors, rope makers—in short, tradesmen whom people like to talk to, and who could thus exert political influence. In the city, the parties split party on economic lines, partly on religious lines, and partly according to simply the traditional political opinions in a given family. But in all cases, these local figures were active in political operations.

Above them were the Parliament, the parties, the cabinet, and the party “leader,” either head of the cabinet or of the opposition, who worked with the most important professional figure in the party organization, the “whip.” This latter controlled the patronage of positions; those seeking career advancement therefore had to turn to him, and his role was to come to an understanding with deputies from particular constituencies about such matters. As a result, a class of professional politicians slowly began to develop, with the recruitment of local agents, unpaid at first, roughly comparable to the “party agents” in the German system. Alongside

them, however, a capitalist entrepreneur-style figure emerged in the constituencies: the "election agent," indispensable in the modern British legislative system, with its emphasis on fair elections. Laws in this system sought to control election costs and stem the power of money by forcing candidates to declare their election spending—for in Britain, far more than here in Germany, candidates not only had to strain their voices but had to enjoy the pleasant sensation of opening their wallets.⁴⁰ They had to pay the election agent a lump sum to cover all expenses; the agent tended to make a tidy profit from the transaction.

In Britain, the "leader" had always enjoyed a more powerful position than the party dignitaries both in Parliament and in the country, so as to enable consistent, large-scale policy making. Still, members of Parliament and local elites remained influential. This is how the party organization looked until 1868: half an old-boys' club for local elites, half a functioning business with entrepreneurs and employees.

Then, beginning in Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain⁴¹ and a nonconformist preacher developed the "caucus system," which resulted from the democratization of eligible voters. To win mass support, parties needed a gigantic apparatus of democratic-seeming groups—an election association in every neighborhood, kept running at all times, and thoroughly bureaucratized. Increasingly, this meant paid employees: representatives of party policy, elected by local election committees which themselves contained as many as 10 percent of eligible voters and with the right to elect new members themselves (so-called cooperation rights). The driving force was local people responsible for raising funds, especially the groups interested in municipal politics—always where the juiciest opportunities are to be found. This new machine,

no longer run from Parliament, quickly found itself embroiled in struggles with the previous power holders, especially the whip, but with the support of the interested locals it prevailed, to the point where the whip had to adapt and work with this new machine. As a result, all power was centralized in a few people at the head of the party—eventually one person. In the Liberal Party this development coincided with Gladstone's rise to power. What gave the new machine a rapid victory over the local elites was the combination of Gladstone's "grand demagoguery" and the fascination it exerted, the masses' firm belief in the moral nature of Gladstone's policies and, especially, his personal moral character.

Now a Caesarist plebiscitary element emerged—the dictatorship of the winner on the electoral battlefield—and quickly gained in importance. In 1877 the caucus acted for the first time in a national election, with resounding success: the result was Disraeli's fall from power in the middle of his greatest triumphs. By 1886 the new machine was already fully oriented toward the charismatic leader, so that, when the Irish Home Rule debate unfolded,⁴² no one in the whole party apparatus, from top to bottom, asked, "Do we agree with Gladstone's policy?" They simply swung into place behind him, saying "Whatever he does, we will follow him," which meant abandoning Chamberlain, the caucus's own creator.

This machinery requires a sizable staff. There are probably two thousand people in Britain who directly make their living from party politics; far more, of course, are involved in politics, especially local politics, purely to get some sort of position or to serve a particular special interest. The useful caucus politician has opportunities to gratify his vanity, not only his pocketbook. Naturally, the normal ambition is

to become a JP⁴³ or even an MP, and people who have had a good upbringing—"gentlemen"—achieve it. The greatest prize of all, shimmering in the distance, especially for wealthy benefactors (since as much as half of the parties' finances may come from anonymous donations), is the dignity of the peerage.

What was the upshot of this whole system? In normal circumstances, British members of Parliament, with the exception of a few members of cabinet (and some maverick eccentrics), became nothing but a well-disciplined herd of votes. Here in Germany, members of Parliament have tended to at least handle their personal correspondence at their desks in the Reichstag as a show of working for the good of the country; no such gestures are required in Britain, where members of Parliament merely have to vote and avoid betraying the party. They have to appear when called by the whip and do whatever the prime minister or opposition leader needs. And if the leader is strong, the caucus machine out in the country is entirely in his hands, practically without any other direction of its own. In essence, then, a plebiscitary dictator stands above the Parliament and leads the masses by means of the "machine," viewing members of Parliament merely as holders of sinecures who happen to be his adherents.

How are these leaders chosen? First of all: What skills do they need to have? Aside from the qualities that go with having a strong will—decisive everywhere in the world—the crucial thing is being able to give powerful, demagogic speeches. The style required in such oratory has changed over the years—from the age of, say, Cobden, when speeches appealed to the listener's reason; to Gladstone, an expert in "letting the facts speak for themselves" in seemingly objective terms; to the present, when speakers, not unlike the Salvation Army,

often use purely emotional means to move the masses. The existing situation might well be described as "a dictatorship based on exploiting the masses' emotions." And yet the situation also involves the well-developed system of committee work in the British Parliament, which means every politician who wants a leadership role has to *participate*. Every significant minister in recent decades has undergone this very real and effective training, while the practice of reporting and publicly criticizing the work of these committees ensures that the training process is a real winnowing, eliminating the mere demagogue.

This is how it works in Britain. The caucus system there is very watered down, though, compared with the structure of political parties in America, where the plebiscitary principle took an especially pure form especially early. George Washington wanted his America to be a society run by "gentlemen," which at the time meant, there too, a landowner or college-educated man. And that was how the country was in fact run, at first. As parties formed, the members of the House of Representatives claimed leading roles, like the local elites in Britain at the time. Parties were organized very loosely. This was the state of affairs until 1824.⁴⁴ Before that, the party machine had started to develop in some communities—in this realm too the harbingers of modern developments—but the old traditions were not fully thrown overboard until Andrew Jackson, the candidate of the Western farmers, was elected president. By soon after 1840, the system whereby leading congressmen ran the parties was over: congressmen John Calhoun and Daniel Webster retired from political life because Congress had lost almost all its power to the party machines in the countryside.

The reason why the plebiscitary "machine" developed so

early in America is that there, and only there, the chief executive, who was (crucially) the man in charge of official patronage, was a popularly elected president, almost independent of Congress due to the "separation of powers." Thus the presidential election in particular carried with it a rich booty of offices and benefits as the reward of victory. Jackson systematically raised this system, the "spoils system," to a principle, and everything followed from that.

What this system—granting all national offices to the followers of the winning candidate—means for parties is that they become opposing organizations for the purpose of winning jobs, not with any other beliefs or principles. They change their platforms for any given election based solely on the effort to win the most votes, and do so more often than other parties elsewhere, despite certain analogies. The parties are entirely shaped around the elections that matter most for official patronage: the presidential election nationally, and the governor's election on the state level. The party's "national convention"—a party congress, in other words, made up of representatives chosen very democratically by assemblies of delegates who owe their mandates to the party "primaries"—decides on platforms and candidates without any input from congressmen or senators. Even in the primaries, delegates are chosen in the name of the presidential (or gubernatorial) candidate; the bitterest struggles to receive the nomination take place *within* the individual party.

The president has the power to fill *three to four hundred thousand* official positions, with nominees entirely of his choosing and subject only to Senate approval. The senators are thus powerful politicians. The House of Representatives, in contrast, is relatively powerless, because it bestows no

patronage and because the "separation of powers" means that the cabinet can carry out its functions irrespective of congressional support. Since the cabinet assists the president, who is legitimated by the people, it is not under the control of anyone else, including Congress.

In practical terms, a "spoils system" set up in this way was *possible* in America only because it was a young civilization able to sustain this amateurish way of doing things. Clearly, having three to four hundred thousand party men in positions for which they were unqualified except through their service to the party resulted in monstrous abuses, the kind of corruption and waste of resources acceptable only in a country with still-unlimited economic resources.

Meanwhile, along with the plebiscitary party machine, we now meet the figure of the "boss." Who is this boss? A capitalist entrepreneur of politics, procuring votes for the election out of his own pocket and at his own risk. He might have acquired his first contacts as a lawyer, or bartender, or suchlike business owner, or maybe as a moneylender. Starting there, he spins a bigger web until he "controls" a certain number of votes. At that point, he comes into contact with other local bosses; his zeal, skill, and above all discretion attract the notice of those who have already advanced in their careers, and he begins his rise.

The boss is indispensable for the party organization—the party is centralized in his hands, and it is he who predominantly secures the necessary funds for it. How? Partly through membership dues; primarily by claiming a share of the salary of every official who gained office through him and his party; and also through bribes and gratuities. Anyone who wants to break one of the many laws and get away with it needs the boss's connivance, and has to pay for it or else face unpleasant

consequences. But all that is not enough to provide the necessary operating capital for the party. The boss is truly indispensable as the direct recipient of cash from the great financial magnates, who would not entrust any money for electoral purposes to paid party officials or anyone else required to open his accounts to public view. The boss, with his shrewd discretion in money matters, is obviously the man that the capitalists financing the election trust.

Typically, the boss is a man of absolute sobriety; he does not aim for social status; the "professional" is in any case looked down on in "good society." He seeks nothing but power, as the source of money but also for its own sake. He works in the shadows, and in this differs from the British "leader." You never hear him speak in public; while remaining silent himself, he merely suggests to the speakers what they would be best advised to say. As a rule, he holds no office himself, except sometimes senator; since senators have a constitutional role in determining official patronage, the leading bosses often take up seats there in person. Official posts are handed out according to services rendered to the party; primarily, but often in exchange for cash donations as well, and for some posts there are even quasi-official "taxes": a system of selling official positions, familiar from many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monarchies, including the Vatican.

The boss has no fixed political "principles": he asks only what will bring in the votes. He is often a relatively uneducated man, but one who tends to have an irreproachable private life. Only in his political ethics does he naturally conform to the reigning moral standards of political action at the time, as many of us here in Germany likely did during the war in the economic realm when food was in short sup-

ply and hoarding was rife. He is held in contempt as a "professional" politician, but he doesn't give a damn about that. The fact that he will never hold the great offices of the Union, nor even aspire to hold them, has certain advantages: when the bosses think it will bring in the votes, they not infrequently make intelligent, reputable men from outside the party their candidates, as opposed to the same old party leaders every time, as in Germany. The structure of these unprincipled parties with their socially despised power brokers has itself propelled to the presidency able men who would never have attained high office in Germany. At the same time, of course, the bosses resist any outsider who poses a threat to their own sources of money and power. And yet, in the battle for the goodwill of the voters, they are often enough forced to accept even the candidates considered enemies of corruption.

In America, then, we have party machines organized on strictly capitalist lines from top to bottom, underpinned by well-established political clubs such as Tammany Hall, organized rather like traditional religious or knightly orders and striving solely to maximize profits by gaining political control of town halls—there too the most desirable objects of exploitation. This system was possible due to the high level of democratization in the United States as a "young country," which also means that the system is slowly dying out. America can no longer be run by dilettantes. Fifteen years ago, when American workers were asked why they let themselves be ruled by politicians they themselves said they despised, the workers answered: "We would rather have officials we spit on than a caste of civil servants who spit on us, like you have." This was the perspective of American "democracy." The Socialists took a completely different view,

even then. And such conditions now are no longer tolerated. Amateur government is not enough anymore, and the civil service reform is creating lifetime positions, with pensions, in ever-greater numbers; as a result, posts are being filled by university-educated civil servants exactly as competent and incorruptible as ours. About a hundred thousand positions are no longer spoils to be handed out after each election, but permanent jobs with standardized qualifications, jobs that come with a pension and benefits. This will lead to the further decline of the spoils system, and the form that the party leadership takes will no doubt change as well, although we don't yet know how.

In *Germany*, the crucial circumstances influencing the conduct of politics have been as follows. First: Parliament had no power. Thus no one with leadership qualities stayed in Parliament for long. Even if he wanted to stay—what could he accomplish? If a ministerial post opened up, he could tell the head of the department, "I have a good candidate in my constituency, a very competent man. Hire him!" Done. But that was more or less all a German member of Parliament could do so satisfy his desire for power—if he had any.

Second (and the cause of the first): The enormous importance of the specialized, educated civil service in Germany. We were preeminent in the world with respect to such bureaucratic. And as a result, our bureaucrats aspired not only to civil service jobs but to ministerial posts. In the Bavarian state legislature just last year, someone said during the debate on "parliamentarization" that gifted people would no longer become civil servants if ministerial posts were given to members of Parliament.⁴⁵ In addition, administration by the bureaucracy systematically avoided the kind of parliamentary control that the English committee system often produced.

So, with few exceptions, the German Parliaments were unable to produce truly useful administrative heads.

Third: We in Germany had parties with distinct political positions, unlike the parties in America; our parties claimed, in at least subjective good faith, that their members held certain convictions, represented a particular "worldview." The two most important such parties, however—the Center Party and the Social Democratic Party—were minority parties by design. The leadership in the Center Party made no bones about being against the parliamentary system, because they were afraid this system would keep them in the minority and make it harder for members to secure careers by putting pressure on the government, as they had done before. The Social Democrats were an opposition party on principle, and an obstacle to the parliamentary system because they did not want to dirty their hands with the existing bourgeois political system. With both of these parties refusing to join the parliamentary system, that system was unworkable.

And so what happened to German professional politicians? They had no power, no responsibilities, no role to play but the rather secondary one of "local elites." As a result, they were once again guided by the herd instinct typical of "guilds" everywhere. Among these members of local elites living off their little posts, no one could rise who was in any way different. I could name you very many people, from every party—the Social Democrats included, of course—whose political careers ended tragically precisely because they had leadership qualities and *therefore* the local elites couldn't stand them. All our parties have thus developed into a herdlike "guild" of local elites. August Bebel was still a leader by temperament, pure of character however modest his intellect, and the fact that he was a political martyr—and

that he never abused the trust of the masses (in their view)—meant they stood behind him and no power in the party could seriously challenge him.⁴⁶ But then he died, and the rule of the officials began. Trade union officials, party secretaries, and journalists came to the fore, and bureaucratic instincts took over the party. This was a bureaucracy of the utmost integrity, it must be said, especially when we consider the often-corrupt union officials in America, but the consequences of the “rule of the official” discussed earlier now emerged in the party as well.

From the 1880s on, the bourgeois parties have been nothing but such “guilds.” Occasionally they would attract intellectuals from outside the party for publicity purposes, so that they could say “this or that famous man is one of us.” Whenever possible, they would make sure that these same men did not run for office; only when one of them insisted did it happen. Parliament is the same. Our parliamentary parties were and are guilds. Every speech given in the plenary session of the Reichstag has been previously reviewed by the party. You can tell that this is true by how unbelievably boring they are. Only members called on are permitted to speak. A starker contrast with the British system, or even (for entirely opposite reasons) the French, is hard to imagine.

At the moment, given the violent collapse that people choose to call a revolution, a transformation may be in progress. Maybe—it is not certain. First, rudiments of new kinds of party organization began to appear. These included amateur organizations, most often staffed by students from different universities who would tell anyone they saw as a leader: “We’ll do for you whatever needs to be done, just tell us what it is.” There were also commercial initiatives. People would go to men they saw as leaders and offer to take over the job

of canvassing for votes, in exchange for a fixed fee per vote. To be honest, I would probably have to call the second type of organization more reliable than the first, in purely practical political terms. In any case, both were bubbles that popped the moment they appeared, while the existing initiatives stayed in operation, though they had to be reorganized. These new forms were merely symptoms of the belief that new organizations had to spring up... if only there were leaders. But practical problems of proportional representation were enough on their own to make this impossible. A few “dictators of the street” emerged and quickly vanished.⁴⁷ But such figures have the only followers who are capable of maintaining strict discipline—this explains the power of such tiny and ever-smaller minorities.

But let us assume that the situation will change. We need to realize, given what I have already said, that when popularly elected leaders are put in charge of parties, their followers’ souls are “hollowed out”: the followers undergo a spiritual proletarianization, one might say. In order to be useful to the leader, followers must blindly obey—must be a “machine” in the American sense—with no pretensions to their own views or vanity connected to status in the “local elite.” Only this kind of organization made Lincoln’s election possible; the caucus functioned the same way in electing Gladstone. That is the price to pay for having a leader.

This is the choice: You either have a democracy with leaders and “machines,” or a leaderless democracy, meaning the rule of “professional politicians” with no vocation—with none of the inner charismatic qualities that make someone a leader. And that turns into what the opposition in any given party generally calls “a cabal of insiders pulling the strings.”

At the moment, we have the latter situation in Germany,

and we are likely to continue to have it in future, due to two factors. First, the upper house [Bundesrat] will likely be revived, and thus limit the power of the Parliament [Reichstag] and its importance as a place from which leaders are selected; second, our system of proportional representation, which is a typical feature of leaderless democracies. It fosters horse-trading for posts among the local elites, but also gives outside interest groups the chance to force the inclusion of their officials in the lists, creating a politically neutralized Parliament with no place for real leaders. The only avenue for satisfying the need for a leader might be the office of president of Germany,⁴⁸ if he were to be elected directly, not by the Parliament. If the larger cities and towns directly elected powerful municipal executives with the right to fill their own posts independently, as happened in the United States wherever a serious attempt was made to combat corruption, then leadership based on proven ability could emerge. But this would require party organizations tailored to such elections. Since all our parties, especially the Social Democratic Party, share a thoroughly petty-bourgeois hostility to leaders, it is impossible to predict how parties will be organized in the future, and thus how likely these changes are.

As a result, there is no way to see how the business of politics can be institutionally organized to correspond to any kind of "higher calling." Even less can we see how a politically talented person might get the opportunity to tackle a politically satisfying task. Anyone forced by his financial situation to live "from" politics will typically face a choice between journalism or becoming a party official, or else he could consider working for the local government, or a special interest group: a trade union, chamber of commerce, farmers' association, interest group for a trade or industry, employers'

association, and so forth. The only other thing to say about the socioeconomic aspect of the situation is that the party official, like the journalist, is looked down on as "déclassé": a "hired hack" if he is a journalist; a "speaker for hire" if he works for the party. This insult, spoken or unspoken, will ring in his ears. Anyone lacking inner defenses against such attacks and unable to find a good answer to them should avoid these careers, which in any case will also probably expose him to grave temptations and constant disappointments.

What psychological rewards does this career have to offer, in that case? What personal qualifications are needed in anyone who chooses it?

The first thing it offers is a sense of power. Even in relatively modest positions, the full-time professional politician will feel his influence over other people, his share of power over them; most of all, he will feel his own importance as one who holds at least some of the guiding threads of a historically important process in his hands. Now he faces the question of what qualities *he* needs to live up to this power and responsibility (however circumscribed it may be). With this, we arrive at the realm of ethics, for it is an ethical question to ask: What kind of person should be *allowed* to grasp the captain's wheel of history?

For a politician, three qualities are most important: passion, a sense of responsibility, and clarity of vision.* Passion

*Translator's note: The usual translation of the third requirement is "a sense of proportion." In German the word is *Angemessenheit*, literally, "eye measurement": the ability, important for people like architects and painters, to look at something and correctly judge its size and proportions. But "a sense of proportion" in English implies moderation, or else keeping an aesthetically harmonious balance among various parts. These are not Weber's points. As he makes clear, he means "having a good eye" for the facts, being able to "size things up," to see them as they are, not as you want them to be.

in the sense of *commitment*: burning devotion to a goal or "cause" and the god or demon who rules over it. I do not mean the state of mind my late friend Georg Simmel used to describe as "sterile excitation"—this is characteristic of a certain type of intellectual, especially some (not all!) Russian intellectuals and many who are playing an important role in Germany today, in the carnival being dignified with the name of "revolution." This state of mind is nothing but the "Romanticism of the intellectually curious," going nowhere, without any sense of purpose. Mere passion, no matter how genuinely felt, is not enough to accomplish anything. And it certainly cannot make a politician out of anyone, unless that passion serves a cause: unless *responsibility* toward that goal—a sense of *obligation* to work toward it—becomes the decisive guiding light of one's actions. *Clean-sighted detachment* is necessary as well: maintaining inner calm and composure while letting yourself be guided by reality, by the true state of things. The single most important psychological quality a politician needs is the ability to keep people and things at a certain *distance*. The lack of such detachment is, by itself, a kiss of death for any politician; encouraging our young intellectuals to avoid this "distance" condemns them to be politically useless.

For the problem is how to bring hot passion and cool clarity of vision together in one and the same soul. Politics is conducted with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul. If it is to be an authentic human activity and not just a frivolous intellectual game, one has to devote oneself to it with a commitment born of, nourished by, passion—but the powerful restraint of the spirit that defines the passionate politician, distinguishing him from the dilettantish man of mere "sterile excitation," is possible only if one has gained

a certain distance, in every sense of the word. The "strength" of a political "personality" is first and foremost the degree to which it possesses these qualities.

Thus one enemy the politician faces every day, every hour, and must overcome in himself—an utterly trivial, all-too-human enemy—is ordinary *vanity*, the deadly enemy of any commitment to one's goals and of every kind of detachment, in this case a sense of perspective about oneself.

Vanity is extremely common, and perhaps no one is entirely free of it. In academic circles, it is something of an occupational hazard. But the scholar's vanity, while perhaps particularly unpleasant to listen to, is also relatively harmless, in the sense that it doesn't generally disrupt the scholarship itself. With politicians it is very different. To do his job, a politician needs a desire for power; this "lust for power," as it is often called, is precisely how he acts as a politician, and is thus one of the politician's normal attributes. The sin against the holy spirit of his calling begins when the politician's lust for power is no longer *grounded in objective reality* and instead simply intoxicates the politician personally.

In fact, there are ultimately only two kinds of deadly sin in the political realm, often the same but not always: lack of objectivity and lack of responsibility. Vanity—the need to put oneself at center stage as much as possible—is what most tempts the politician into either or both of these sins, all the more so as the demagogue has to try to "be effective," "make an impression," and is thus always at risk of turning into a mere actor and minimizing his own responsibility for the consequences of his actions. Losing objectivity makes him long for the brilliant appearance of power irrespective of his actual power, while his irresponsibility consists in enjoying power for its own sake, not for the sake of any substantive

purpose. For although, or rather *because*, power is the unavoidable means of all political action, and the last for power its driving force, there is no more destructive corruption of political power than the parvenu blustering around, conceitedly rejoicing in feeling powerful, or worshipping in any way power as such.

The mere "power politician" may be effective, and is adored just as zealously here in Germany as elsewhere, but his effects are empty and meaningless—in this, the critics of "power politics" are entirely correct. We have seen often enough how people with this attitude can suddenly lose resolve, practically collapse psychologically, revealing the inner weakness and impotence behind their showy but utterly vacuous bluster. This bluster is the product of an exceedingly impoverished and superficial indifference to the *meaning* of human actions, which has nothing whatsoever to do with understanding the tragedy woven throughout the fabric of all human action, especially in politics.

It is true in every way—it is a fundamental fact of all history, though one I cannot explore further here—that political action often, indeed regularly, leads to final results that totally fail to fit, or even entirely go against, the original intention. But that does not mean we can do without this initial intention. Unless we are *working toward something specific*, our actions aren't anchored in any purpose or meaning. Now, the *kind* of cause the politician seeks to serve, and wields his power in order to serve, is a matter of personal belief. It can be a national cause or extend to all humanity, can be ethical or cultural, worldly or religious; perhaps the politician is animated by a strong belief in "progress" (in whatever sense), or perhaps he coolly rejects such belief; maybe he claims to serve "an idea," or maybe he rejects ide-

alism on principle and tries to pursue concrete goals grounded in everyday life—whatever the belief, there *must be one* of some kind. Otherwise, even the greatest apparent political accomplishments will suffer, and rightly, from the meaninglessness that besets everything we mortal creatures undertake.

And with this we arrive at the last problem I propose to address this evening: that of the *ethics* of politics as a "cause." In the overall moral economy of ways it is possible to live one's life, what higher calling can politics answer—politics itself, irrespective of any particular political aims? Where in the moral universe is politics at home? Here different ultimate worldviews are in conflict with one another, obviously, and we must simply *choose* among them. Let me tackle this problem head-on—for it has recently been addressed from what I consider the entirely wrong angle.

First let me remove a quite banal misunderstanding. Ethics can often be used in morally disastrous ways. For example, a man who has ceased to love one woman and has fallen in love with another almost always feels the need to justify this shift to himself by saying that the former "was not worthy of my love," or "disappointed me," or whatever the alleged reason might be. This is a deeply unchivalrous reaction to the brute fact that he no longer loves her and she has to accept that; it is compounded by the even deeper ruthlessness of inventing a "legitimation" that puts himself in the right, and from her point of view adds insult to injury. The successful erotic rival acts in exactly the same way: the defeated suitor or husband must be worth less, otherwise he would not have been defeated.

Obviously it is no different when the victorious side in a war childishly insists that because they won they were right. Or when someone has a mental breakdown due to the

horrors of war and, instead of simply saying, "It was too much," feels the need to justify his war fatigue to himself: "I couldn't stand it anymore *because* I was being forced to fight for an unjust cause." The same is true for the defeated side: Instead of going around after the war in a fussy, womanish search for "guilty parties" to blame it on—when in fact the whole structure of society is what led to the war—the upright and manly approach is to say to the enemy, "Yes, we lost the war and you won it. That's over and done with. Now let us discuss what conclusions to draw with respect to the *objective* interests that were at stake, and, most important, in light of our responsibility to the *future*—a responsibility that necessarily weighs most heavily on the victor."⁴⁹ Everything else is undignified, and no good will come of it. A nation can forgive a defeat of its interests, but not an injury to its honor, least of all when that injury comes with sanctimonious self-righteousness. Every new document that comes to light decades later will only renew the undignified scolding and revive hate and rage, rather than letting the end of the war put it to rest at least in *moral* terms. This is possible only through chivalry, attending to objective matters, and above all, acting with *dignity*. It will never be accomplished with an "ethical approach" that actually demeans both sides. Such an approach, instead of focusing on what should concern politicians—the future, and responsibility for the future—remains stuck in questions of past guilt, which are irresolvable and hence politically fruitless. If anything constitutes political guilt, it is staying stuck in the past in this way. Moreover, such an approach conceals the way the whole issue is unavoidably distorted by material interests: the victor naturally wants the greatest possible gain, both moral and material, while the defeated side hopes for various con-

cessions in exchange for admitting guilt. If anything is "vulgar," it is this—and it is the consequence of using "ethics" to "prove" one is "right."

So what, then, is the true relationship between ethics and politics? Do they have nothing whatsoever to do with each other, as has sometimes been claimed? Or, on the contrary, is political action subject to "the same" ethical principles as every other kind of action?

Some have argued that one or the other of these positions must be right: that these are the only, mutually exclusive alternatives. But really is there any ethical system in the world that can impose the *same* demands on every single interpersonal relationship—erotic and economic, in the workplace and in the family, with a wife, a greengrocer, a son, a competitor, a friend, and a defendant alike? Is it really irrelevant to the ethical demands of politics that politics works with a very specific means: *power*, backed by the threat of *violence*? Isn't it clear that the Bolshevik and Spartacist ideologues are achieving the *exact same* results as some military dictator precisely because they are using this same political means? What is the difference between the rule of the Council of Workers and Soldiers and that of any other strongman from the old regime, except in terms of who exactly holds power and how serious or dilettantish they are being about it? How should we distinguish between the arguments of the supposedly new ethical systems against their critics, and the arguments of any other demagogues? By their noble purpose! we are told. All well and good, but what is in question here is the *means*, and their opponents claim just as sincerely to be working toward noble *ends*. "If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword," and a fight is a fight.

So then, what about the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount? By which I mean the absolute demands made by the Gospels.⁵⁰ This is a more serious question than the people who like to quote its commandments nowadays seem to think. It is no laughing matter. We may say of this ethical system, as has been said about causality in science: It is no hansom cab that you can summon at will, to jump into or out of whenever you want. It is *all or nothing*—that is what the Sermon on the Mount means, if it amounts to anything at all beyond platitudes. Consider the rich young man told to sell all he had and give to the poor: "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." The Gospel's command is unambiguous and unconditional. Give up *everything*. The politician will reply: This makes no sense, in social terms, unless it applies to everyone, meaning universal taxation, confiscation, redistribution, in short universal coercion and control. But the ethical commandment, by its nature, *completely dismisses* such concerns.

Or again: "Turn the other cheek!" Turn it unconditionally, without asking or caring why the other person is hitting you. This is an ignominious ethical code—except for saints. And there you have it: Either you must be, or at least try to be, a saint in *everything*, must live like Jesus and the apostles and Saint Francis and the rest, and *then* this ethical code is dignified and meaningful, or else *it isn't*. The ascapist ethics of love demands:⁵¹ "Resist not evil with violence"; the politician, in contrast, *should* resist evil with violence, because otherwise he will be *responsible* for evil gaining the upper hand.⁵² Acting according to the ethics of the Gospel means never going on strike—because strikes are acts of coercion—and instead working as a scab. It certainly means never considering "revolution." For this ethical system surely does

not contain the lesson that a civil war is the only just war there is. He who acts according to the Gospels will be a pacifist, laying down or indeed casting off all weapons, as was recommended in Germany as an ethical duty so as to end the war and thus all wars. The politician will say that the only sure way to discredit war *for the foreseeable future* would have been to return to the peacetime status quo ante—that would make the nations ask, "What was the war for?" A *reductio ad absurdum*. But now this is not possible, because it turns out that the war paid political dividends for the victors, or at least some of the victors. They gained these dividends precisely from the actions that made it impossible for us to resist them. And so now, after a period of exhaustion has passed, *peace, not war, will have been discredited*: this too results from a total, absolute ethical system.

Finally, we have the duty to tell the truth. For an absolute ethics, this duty is unconditional. Which was taken to mean that all documents, especially those incriminating our own nation, should be published. As a result of this unilateral publication, we had a one-sided, unconditional admission of guilt, with no regard to the consequences. The politician will conclude that this publication did not in fact serve the cause of truth, but obscure it, by misusing the truth and unleashing the passions, and that only a systematic, nonpartisan investigation of all sides would be helpful, while any other process might have consequences for the nation in question that will be irreparable for decades. But an absolute ethics cares nothing for "consequences."

This is the crucial point. We need to be clear that all ethically oriented action is guided by one of *two* fundamentally different, irredeemably opposed maxims: either an "ethics of personal conviction" or an "ethics of responsibility."

Not that an ethical system based on personal conviction is irresponsible, or that people who feel responsible for the consequences of their actions lack convictions. Obviously that is not what I'm saying here. Still, there is a deep chasm between acting according to normative demands—in religious terms, "A Christian does what is right and leaves the rest in God's hands"⁵³—and, on the other hand, acting in a way that takes account of, and takes responsibility for, the (foreseeable) *consequences* of one's actions.

However indisputably you prove to the syndicalist true believer who follows an "ethics of personal conviction" that the consequences of his actions will strengthen the forces of reaction, increase the oppression of his own class, and limit its chances to rise—it won't make the slightest impression on him. He feels that if you act from true conviction, you are not responsible for any bad outcomes: it's the world's fault, or the fault of other people's stupidity, or of the God who created humanity this way. Those who hold an "ethics of responsibility," in contrast, take these average human failings into account—as Fichte so rightly said, we have no right to presuppose human goodness and perfection.⁵⁴ Someone with an ethics of responsibility feels no right to foist the (predictable) consequences of his own actions onto others—he will say that these consequences are part and parcel of the actions themselves. Whereas under an ethics of personal conviction, one feels "responsible" for nothing but preserving the flame of pure conviction—for example, of protest against the injustice of the social order. The goal of your actions is to keep fanning the flame. What you do may be totally irrational when judged from the standpoint of its possible success, but your actions are meant to have only exemplary value.

This does not exhaust the problem. No ethical system in the world can get around the truth that achieving "good" ends often requires morally dubious or at least risky means, as well as accepting the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that our actions will have bad unintended consequences. And no ethical system in the world can say for sure when, and to what extent, a moral end "justifies," even sanctifies, immoral means and consequences.

In politics, the decisive means is the use of force. We can see how great the moral tension between means and ends is from the fact that, as we all know, the revolutionary Socialists (coming out of the Zimmerwald Conference⁵⁵) adopted the principle, even during the war, which we might succinctly formulate as: "If we are facing the choice of another few years of war and then revolution, or peace now but no revolution, we choose more years of war!" If then asked what the revolution might accomplish, any initiate well versed in the theory of Socialism would answer that there was no way a revolution could bring about a transition to an economic system that was Socialist in *this* sense of the word; it could lead only to another bourgeois economy, although one with its feudalist and dynastic vestiges stripped away. And this is the modest result for which they would choose "more years of war"! Surely it is fair to say that, however firm one's Socialist convictions, one might reject an end that necessitates such means. But that is how the Bolshevik and Spartacist, and every kind of revolutionary, see things. It is ridiculous for them to *morally* denounce the "politics of violence" in the old order for using the same means as they do, however justified they might be in rejecting the old order's *goals*.

This is where an "ethics of personal conviction" seems to inevitably run aground: at the problem of the ends justifying

the means. There is only one logical possibility for such an ethical system: *every* action using morally questionable means must be *rejected*. In the real world, of course, we constantly see people with such convictions suddenly transformed into messianic prophets of revolution. Those who have just been preaching "love over violence," for instance, are a moment later calling for violence... but this is the *last* violence that will ever be needed; it will bring about a golden age in which all violence has been eliminated. (They are like our military commanders who tell the soldiers in every offensive that this will be the last one, the one that will bring victory and then peace.) He who lives by an ethics of personal conviction cannot tolerate the ethical irrationality of the world. In moral terms, he is a cosmic "rationalist." All of you who have read Dostoyevsky will recall the scene with the Grand Inquisitor, which lays out the problem so incisively. It is impossible to reconcile an ethics of personal conviction with an ethics of responsibility, or to decree in general the morality of *which* ends justify *which* means, if indeed you give any weight to this principle of justification at all.

My colleague F. W. Förster—whom I hold in high esteem for the undoubted integrity of his convictions while I also unconditionally disapprove of his political actions—tries in his book to get around this problem with the simple thesis that only good can come of good, only evil can come of evil.⁵⁶ That would certainly solve everything. But it is rather astounding to see someone put forward such a claim twenty-five hundred years after the Upanishads saw the light of day. Not only the entire course of world history but every clear-eyed examination of our own everyday experience shows the opposite.

Every religion in the world presupposes, in fact, that the

opposite is true. The age-old problem of theodicy is precisely: How could a power said to be both omnipotent and good have created a world as irrational as ours, full of undeserved suffering, unpunished wrongdoing, and incorrigible stupidity? Either it is not omnipotent, or it is not good, or else life is governed by totally different principles of retribution and compensation, which we can understand metaphysically or which will forever elude our understanding. This problem—the experience of the irrationality of the universe—has been the driving force in the whole history of religion. The Indian doctrine of karma, Persian dualism, original sin, predestination, the *Deus absconditus*: all grew out of this same experience. The early Christians too knew perfectly well that the world was ruled by demons and that anyone who was involved in politics (that is, with the means of power and violence) thereby made a pact with the devil—when it came to his actions, it was *not* true that only good can come of good, only evil can come of evil. It was often the opposite. Anyone blind to that is a child when it comes to politics.

Religious ethics have come to terms in various ways with the fact that we all live subject to different laws and order our lives in accord with different systems.⁵⁷ Greek polytheists made sacrifices to both Aphrodite and Hera, both Dionysus and Apollo, while knowing that these divinities were often in conflict with one another. Hindu culture made a particular ethical law, or dharma, for each profession and divided them permanently from one another, as different castes; they were locked into a fixed hierarchy, at a greater or lesser distance from what was highest and most sacred, and someone born into one caste could never escape it except by rebirth in the next life. Thus Hinduism could elaborate the dharma of each different caste in accord with its intrinsic

laws, from the ascetics and the Brahmins down to the villains and the whores, including the military and political professions. You can see in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, how war was fully integrated into the totality of a way of life: "Do the work that is necessary"—that is, necessary for the cause of the war in accord with the rules and dharma of the warrior caste; in this belief system, such work leads to religious salvation rather than detracting from it. The Indian warrior who died a hero's death was as sure of Indra's heaven as the Germanic warrior was of Valhalla; meanwhile, the former would have scorned nirvana no less than the latter would a Christian paradise with choirs of angels. This ethical specialization made it possible for Indian philosophy to treat the royal art of politics in a fully consistent way, subject only to intrinsically political laws and in fact radically intensifying those laws. Genuine, radical "Machiavellianism" in the popular sense of the word is to be found in Indian literature centuries before the Christian era, in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (purportedly from the time of Chandragupta)—Machiavelli's own *The Prince* is harmless by comparison.

It is also well known that Catholic ethics, which Professor Förster otherwise upholds, includes specialized ethical subcategories; for example, the one described in the *Consilia Evangelica*,⁵⁸ applicable to those endowed with the charisma of the holy life. But alongside the monk who may not shed blood or earn his living, we find the pious knight permitted to do the former and the burgher permitted to do the latter. The hierarchy of ethical values and their integration into an organic doctrine of salvation is, to be sure, less consistent than in India, and had to be, given the premises of the Christian faith. But the corruption of the world through

original sin allows for a relatively easy integration of violence into ethics as a punishment for sin and the heretics who endanger the human soul. And the purely acosmist ethical demands of personal conviction in the Sermon on the Mount, and the absolute demands of a religious natural law based on those ethics, retained their revolutionary violence and reemerged with elemental fury in almost every era of social upheaval. In particular, these demands created radical pacifist sects, one of which, in Pennsylvania, tried the experiment of a government that renounced the use of force against the outside world. The experiment took a tragic course, insofar as the Quakers were unable to take up arms when the Revolutionary War broke out—a war fought to defend their own ideals. Normal Protestantism, in contrast, legitimated the state (that is, the use of violence) in absolute terms as a divine institution, and particularly endorsed the legitimate authoritarian state. Luther shifted moral responsibility for the war from the individual to the authorities: obeying the authorities in nonreligious matters could never be morally wrong. Calvinism recognized the principle of violence as a way to defend the faith—religious war—which had been central to Islam from the start.

Clearly the problem of political ethics was *not* introduced in the modern era, with the unbelief born from the cult of the hero during the Renaissance.⁵⁹ All religions have wrestled with it, to wildly different degrees of success—and given what we have said, it could not have been otherwise. What generates the particular moral problems of politics is, pure and simple, the *legitimate use of violence* by some groups of people against others.

Whoever makes a deal with the devil concerning the use of force for some purpose or another—as every politician

does—must face the consequences of that choice. This is especially true of those who fight for their beliefs, whether religious or revolutionary. The present day provides examples enough. Anyone who wants to bring about absolute justice on earth *by force* needs followers, a human “machinery” to whom he holds out the prospect of the necessary spiritual and material, heavenly and earthly rewards. Otherwise the machine doesn’t function. “Spiritual rewards,” in the context of the modern class struggle, means gratifying these followers’ hatred, satisfying their lust for revenge, and, especially, justifying their resentment and need for pseudo-moral self-righteousness—their need to denounce and blame their opponents. The “material rewards” are excitement, victory, booty, power, sinecures. The leader’s success or failure depends entirely on the functioning of this machinery—and thus on *its*, not his own, motivations. He needs to *constantly supply and permanently guarantee* the rewards they want to the followers he needs—the Red Guard,⁶⁰ the informers, the agitators.

Under these conditions, what the leader actually accomplishes is not up to him; it is constrained by the motives, almost entirely base, that inspire his followers, while the followers can be kept in check only as long as some of them (never all and probably never even a majority) honestly believe in the leader himself and his cause. In truth—let’s be honest with ourselves here—this belief in the cause, as subjectively sincere as it may be, is almost always merely a moral “legitimation” for the desire for power, revenge, booty, and benefits: the materialist interpretation of history too is no hansom cab to be hailed at will, and it doesn’t stop for the agents of revolution! But then, after the emotional revolution, comes the return to traditional *everyday life*; the hero

of the believers, and even the belief itself, disappears or becomes even more effective as a conventional slogan in the political philistine’s or functionary’s arsenal.

This development takes place especially quickly after struggles of belief, because those tend to be waged or at least inspired by *real leaders*: prophets of revolution. As in every leadership situation, here too the followers have to be psychologically emptied out and turned into a machine, as it were, spiritually proletarianized in the interests of “discipline.” And so, when the followers of such a prophet come to power, they tend to degenerate into ordinary fortune hunters exceptionally easily.

Anyone who wants to pursue politics, and especially a professional career in politics, needs to be aware of these ethical paradoxes and his responsibility for what *he himself will become* under their pressure. To reiterate: He is making a deal with the devil that lurks in every act or threat of violence.

The great masters of otherworldly goodness and love for humanity—whether they come from Nazareth or Assisi or the royal palaces of India—didn’t work with the means of politics, which is violence: their kingdom was “not of this world,” and yet they had and have effects in this world. Tolstoy’s Platon Karatayev⁶¹ and Dostoyevsky’s various saints are still the best modern reconstructions of such figures. Those who seek to save their soul, and others’ souls, do not do so via politics—the tasks of politics are entirely different and can be carried out only with violence. The genius, or daemon, of Politics lives in inner tension with the god of Love, and the god of the organized Christian religion too, and this tension can break out into irresolvable conflict at any moment. People knew this in the periods of papal rule

as well. Time and time again, the Church placed an interdict on the whole city of Florence—which meant incalculably more to people and the salvation of their souls than the “cold endorsement” (in Fichte’s words) of a Kantian moral judgment—and yet its citizens continued to fight against the papacy.⁶² It was in reference to such a state of affairs that Machiavelli, in a beautiful passage of, if I remember correctly, *The History of Florence*, has one of his heroes praise the citizens who value the greatness of their native city more than the salvation of their souls.

If you replace “native city” or “fatherland”—terms that may have different value for different people today—with “the future of Socialism” or “international peace,” you have today’s version of the problem. Under an ethics of responsibility, any such goal pursued through *political* action, with violent means, endangers “the salvation of the soul.” Meanwhile, pursuing this goal under a pure ethics of personal conviction, in a war among different beliefs, risks damaging and discrediting the cause for generations to come, because the true believer takes no responsibility for the *consequences* of his actions, remaining unaware of the demonic powers in play. These powers are inexorable and create consequences for people’s actions—psychological consequences for the political actor himself too—and he is helpless against them if he fails to see them.

“The Devil is old”—and Goethe does not mean old in years—“so grow old to understand him.”⁶³ I have never let an earlier date on someone’s birth certificate convince me of his arguments, but by the same token the mere fact that someone is twenty while I am over fifty doesn’t automatically make me worship his accomplishments. It’s not age that matters. What matter are a ruthless, practiced perspective

on the realities of life and the ability to endure these realities and deal with them psychologically.

The truth is, politics is conducted with the head, but by no means *only* with the head. The true believers in an ethics of personal conviction are right about that. But no one can decide for other people whether they *should* act in accord with an ethics of personal conviction or an ethics of responsibility.

There is only one thing we can say. We may be living in exciting times, and it may seem that this is *not* “sterile excitement” (although excitement is in no way necessarily the same thing as genuine passion); in such times, large numbers of politicians of personal conviction may *suddenly* start running around claiming, “The world is ignorant and evil, I’m not; I’m not responsible for the consequences, other people are responsible, and I’m going to root out their evil and stupidity.” When this happens, I say loud and clear that I want to know how much *inner gravity* lies behind this ethics of personal conviction. I suspect that in nine out of ten cases I’ll find that these people are windbags who don’t actually feel what they’re claiming to believe, just getting drunk on sensationalized Romanticism.

All this holds little interest for me personally, and certainly doesn’t move me. What does move me, immensely, is when a *mature* human being—whether old or young in years—takes real responsibility, with his whole soul, for the consequences of his actions and, following an ethics of responsibility, stops at some point and says: “Here I stand. I can do no other.”⁶⁴ That is something authentically human and genuinely moving. Because *every one* of us, if we are not dead inside, *may* find ourselves in such a situation at some point. To that extent, the ethics of personal conviction and the ethics of

responsibility are not absolutely opposed: they complement each other, and only in conjunction do they define the true human being who is *capable* of doing the true "work of politics."

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I suggest we return to this topic *in ten years*. If, as alas I fear for a whole host of reasons, a reactionary period will have long since kicked in by then; if little of what many of you, I'm sure, are hoping for, and what I too wish and hope for, has been accomplished, perhaps not nothing but seemingly very little—a result I feel is all too likely, and while it doesn't crush me it certainly is psychologically oppressive to know this in advance; if this turns out to be what has happened, then I would like to see what has, in the truest sense of the word, "become" of those of you who currently feel like true "political actors of conviction" and are partaking of the thrill of the present revolution. It would be wonderful if what Shakespeare's Sonnet 102 describes were true:

Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays;
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
And stops her pipe in growth of ripper days.⁶⁵

But that's not how it is. We face not the flowers of summer but, at least initially, a polar night of harsh and icy darkness, whichever group superficially wins for now. For when nothing is left, not only the kaiser will have lost his rights—the proletariat will have lost theirs too. And when this night slowly recedes, who among those whose spring now seems so lush will still be alive? What will have become of them on the inside? Will they be embittered, or will they have

turned philistine, settling for a flat dull acceptance of the world and their job in it, or—a third, not uncommon, option—will they have adopted a mystical escapism, both those with a genuine gift for such an approach and those who, often, damagingly, force themselves into it for fashion's sake?

In every one of these cases, I will conclude that these people were *not* up to facing their own actions, *nor* to facing the world as it really is and their everyday life in it. Objectively, they did not in fact have the vocation for politics, in the deepest sense, that they thought they had. They would have done better to try to foster brotherhood on a personal level and otherwise simply go about their daily business.

Politics is a slow and difficult drilling of holes into hard boards, done with both passion and clear-sightedness. To achieve what is possible in the world, one must constantly reach for the impossible—this is absolutely true and confirmed by everything we know of history. But to do so, one must be a leader—not only that, a hero, in a very literal sense of the word. Those who are neither leader nor hero must nonetheless remain steadfast of heart, undaunted by the failure of all their hopes—otherwise, they will be unable to achieve even what *is* possible today. Only those who are certain they won't be shattered when the world turns out to be too ignorant or evil for what they are trying to give it—those who can say, even when faced with all that, "And yet!"—only they are truly called to do the work of politics.